Replace this Line with the Title of Your Essay

Your Name Goes Here

American Public University System

Replace this Line with the Title of Your Essay

Start your introductory paragraph(s) here (i.e., delete all of my paragraphs of instruction after reading through them, and replace them with your own paragraphs for your essay). Leave the font for your essay on Arial 10, double-spaced. Leave the margins at 1 inch. Leave page numbering set to automatically number each page of the body of your essay in the upper-right corner of the page (the title page and reference page should not be numbered). The body of your essay should be approximately 4-5 pages long (minimum of 1500 words), not including your title page and reference page.

Make sure all writing is in full sentences and complete paragraphs – no lists or bullet statements. Do not adjust the margins or add indentations, and do not add blank lines between paragraphs or before or after section headings and sub-headings. You may include images or tables in your essay, if needed, but they do not count toward the minimum 1500 words, so adjust the length of your essay accordingly to compensate for space taken up by the images and/or tables.

You should customize the title page by replacing the first two lines of text with your essay’s title and your name, respectively. You should also replace the heading at the top of this page with your essay’s title. However, ***do not modify or remove*** the section sub-headings that appear below, throughout the rest of your essay (i.e., “Characteristics of the Users of the System,” “Features and Usage of the System,” “Impact of the System,” “Conclusion,” and “References”) and do not add additional sub-headings. ***Leave all of the section sub-headings in your document to keep it organized.*** Everyone is required to write the same sections in their essay. You will analyze your own unique approved information system, filling in each section of this template appropriately.

Write in your own words and remember that **your similarity rating must be 15% or less.** Try to paraphrase and explain information you learn from your sources in your own words, rather than quoting from your sources. Your reference page does not count towards your 15% allowable similarity. To check this, after your TurnItIn report is generated, there should be a filter you can click on in the report that will bring up the option to “Exclude Bibliography.” After selecting this option, your adjusted similarity rating needs to be 15% or less. I will select “Exclude Bibliography” on all essays before grading them, to adjust the actual similarity rating in your essay and confirm it is no more than 15%.

Your introductory paragraph(s) should provide an overview of your information system by briefly describing your information system and explaining the purpose of the information system. You can also provide an overview of the primary users of the system, and the primary features and functions of the system. However, try not to be overly redundant in your introduction with what you have written (or will write) in the main sections in the body of your essay. Rather, give the reader an overview and whet their appetite to learn more about your information system.

**Networking, Communications, and Security**

In this section, describe the networking and communications components of your information system. Just like in your first essay where you may have had to make educated assumptions about the server-side components, you may do the same for this section. The relevant chapters in your textbook discuss different aspects of networking and communications infrastructure that should help you form an understanding of the typical components.

Next, discuss the security measures (hardware, software, and procedural) that your information system uses. You should also discuss any special security vulnerabilities or concerns that pertain to your information system and how those concerns are being addressed or whether you feel they are not adequately addressed (in which case you may want to make some recommendations for addressing them in a later section of this essay that focuses on recommendations for improvement).

**Impact of the System**

In this section, you will describe the impact that your information system has on the organization that uses the system, and/or the individual users of the system. If you are analyzing a work-related system, then discuss the impact that it has on your organization. If the system is used by different groups of employees (i.e., lower level employees vs. managers), then you can discuss the impact the system has on each group of employees. If you are analyzing a personal web-based information system (i.e., Facebook), then discuss the impact the system has on the users of the system. In the example of a system like Facebook, you can discuss different groups of users, such as how it impacts individuals who use Facebook, businesses who use Facebook, and other types of groups and organizations who use Facebook.

Be sure that when you discuss the impacts of your system, you don’t simply talk about the features of the system again (which you covered in the previous section). Instead, try to quantify the positive benefits in terms of how the system saves the users **time, money, and/or effort.** For business systems, positive impacts will include how it makes your business processes more effective and efficient. For home and personal systems, positive impacts will include how the system makes some task or tasks in your personal life more effective and efficient. One way to quantify these things is to consider the time, money, and effortthat would be required to accomplish the same tasks manually that you are able to accomplish using the information system. For example, if you are analyzing an online shopping system, like Amazon.com, you can discuss the time and effort that is saves by not having to physically go out to the store to purchase something, or not having to physically visit many different stores to comparison shop. If you are analyzing a work-related system, consider how you would accomplish the same tasks manually and how the information system saves you time, money, and or effort, compared to the manual process that would be required to accomplish the same tasks. You might even consider how the business area that your system is used in actually did accomplish similar tasks in the days before there were computer-based information systems to automate that business process.

Be sure to discuss both positive and negative impacts of your information system. Are there any potential disadvantages to using your information system? **Be sure to come up with at least one potential negative impact.**  If your system is so great that you can’t do without it, then one negative impact could be that users are overly-dependent on the system and aren’t able to accomplish the same tasks when the system is down. However, there are generally other potential negative impacts to any system, as well – see if you can think of several negative impacts, too.

**Competitive Analysis of the System**

In this section, you will analyze how the information system gives a competitive advantage either to the users of the system or to the company that created and maintains the system. Generally, if you are using a work-related information system, the company using the system is doing so in order to gain a competitive analysis over their rivals. However, if you are using a personal web-based information system, you may instead consider how the information system gives the company that created and maintains the system a competitive advantage. For example, Best Buy has a comprehensive web-based information system that customers can use for shopping online as well as for managing their Best Buy rewards account and/or Best Buy credit card account. If you were analyzing this information system, you would analyze competitive advantage from the viewpoint of Best Buy as a company. You would analyze the ways in which their web-based system gives them a competitive advantage over other electronics stores. With some web-based information systems, you may be able to analyze competitive advantage from the perspective of the company that created and maintains the system, as well as from the perspective of some of the users of the system. For example, the creator of Facebook has managed to maintain a competitive advantage over similar rivals such as MySpace and Google+ through the use of network effects, as well as through advertising revenues, etc. However, Facebook can also provide a competitive advantage to organizations and business who use Facebook to advertise their products and services and to communicate with their clients and customers.

Realize that all organizations (even non-profits, government, and military organizations) are concerned about gaining and/or maintaining a competitive advantage. For example our military’s rivals could be considered foreign militaries. The importance of our military being competitive with their rivals should be self-evident. Although government exists to serve its constituents, government organizations often need to concern themselves with providing services that are competitive with industry. Otherwise, if government cannot run their business efficiently, politicians and taxpayers may lobby for the work of government to be outsourced to industry. Even non-profits must be concerned about running their organization efficiently and productively. Non-profits often rely on grants or on government funding. If they cannot prove that they are competitive, they could lose their funding. These are just some of the ways in which your organization may be concerned about gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage over their rivals. Describe in your own words why your organization needs to gain and maintain a competitive advantage and explain who their “rivals” are (i.e., who they are competing against).

Once you understand why your organization needs to maintain a competitive advantage, consider how this information system can help your organization gain and maintain a competitive advantage over their rivals. You may want to review Porter’s Five Forces theory and apply this theory to your information system to help determine ways that your system gives your organization (and/or the organization that created and maintains the system) a competitive advantage. In light of the many challenges inherent in the management of data and knowledge in today’s world, consider how the data assets gathered through the information system might be harnessed to provide business intelligence and a resulting competitive advantage to your organization. Consider whether your information system uses social media or Web 2.0 technologies to market or promote the use and benefit of the information system to businesses and/or potential customers. Also consider other concepts you have learned in this course, such as network effects, in relation to how your information system, can be used to gain and maintain a competitive advantage.

If the finding of your analysis is that your information system does not help your organization to gain and maintain a competitive advantage over their rivals, then instead use this section to explain why it does not. If it does not, then consider what shortcomings of your system would need to be addressed for the system to be able to provide a competitive advantage to users of the system. You can then address these shortcomings in the next section, by making specific recommendations to correct these issues.

**Recommendations for Improving the System**

In this section, you need to make at least three concrete recommendations for improving or enhancing your information system. Even if you think your information system is the best system you’ve ever used, you ***cannot*** simply say, "There is nothing I would recommend changing about this system." 30% of your grade on this essay is based on your full development of three concrete recommendations for improving your information system, with full details about how you would implement each of the three recommendations for change. If you do not come up with recommendations for improving your information system, then I cannot give you any credit for those 30 points. Fortunately, there are ***always*** things that can be improved in any information system. You need to think like an analyst or an entrepreneur and brainstorm for ideas that could make your information system even better. These recommendations need to be ***your own*** original ideas.

Think of this section as writing the design specification for new features that you would like the developers of your system to add to the next version of your system that they release and think of yourself as a “Systems Analyst” who is coming up with enhanced features or functions you want added to your information system. Each recommendation needs to be described thoroughly in its own fully developed paragraph. Your recommendations should not just identify a problem with the system, but should offer a ***specific, concrete solution*** to that problem, along with a plan for how you would implement that solution.

The types of recommendations I am looking for are improvements and enhancements to the computer-based information system itself. I am primarily looking for you to suggest new features and menu options that could be added to the system to make it better. What additional functions would you like your information system to be able to do? I am looking for your own original ideas. Other types of technical recommendations you could make include specific ways you would add additional back-up or redundancy capabilities, or specific hardware upgrades that might increase the speed of the system.

Just **make sure that each recommendation you make is for a *technical* improvement to the system itself**, and not a recommendation for improving the company’s ***business practices*** in relation to the use of the information system. Managerial and organization issues related to the company’s ***business practices*** that are ***not appropriate*** for this section would be recommendations pertaining to training, use of the system, or issues related to the cost of the system – I cannot give you credit for making recommendations pertaining to how people ***use*** the system or how much the system costs. Instead, ***focus primarily on ideas for enhancing the functionality of the information system by adding new features and menu options to the software itself.*** Your recommendations need to involve actual changes to the software and/or hardware of the information system itself. Software changes would involve anything that adds new features, menu options, and functionality to the system, or that changes the user interface, layout, or navigation within the system. Hardware changes could involve addition of backup devices, upgrades to the processor or other components, etc. In any case, you need to justify each recommendation you make by explaining how it will solve an existing problem with the system or enhance the system with new functionality. Be as specific as possible about how you would implement each recommendation. For example, if you recommend that the layout of the system’s graphical user interface be made more user-friendly, then describe exactly what you would change about the layout to improve the usability.

**Conclusion**

Finally, write your concluding paragraph(s) in this section. Try to write a strong conclusion that both ties your essay together and makes a strong final impact on the reader. Rather than simply re-stating what you have already discussed, try to use this section to take the reader one step further. There are many ways to do this and I will leave it to your creativity to come up with an appropriate conclusion for your essay!

**References**

List your references in APA format on this page. I have set this page to use hanging indentations (as required in APA references). You must have at least 3 references.

Also, make sure that you have at least one corresponding in-text citation, in APA format, for each reference that you list in your reference list.